

# **THE BOY WITH GREEN HAIR**

Musical adaptation by:

*Jody Trehy*- lyrics and composition

*Paul Higgs*- composition and orchestration

*Mick Gordon*- book and direction

## **TREATMENT**

*Synopsis of the story:*

THE BOY WITH GREEN HAIR was first an old technicolor film made by RKO in America, (dir. Joseph Losey: 1948) and subsequently a play staged in the early 1950's. It tells the magical tale of a young WW2 orphan, Peter, who ends up living with a distant relative called Gramp. One night, Peter's hair mysteriously turns green. At first his hair is a cause of great amusement around the town until people become fearful that his peculiar condition will spread to their own children.

One day, to escape bullies at school, Peter hides in the woods. Suddenly he hears strange voices around him and when he looks up, he sees other war orphans, from many other countries, magically appearing. They explain how, although difficult, having green hair is a wonderful thing, as it will serve as a constant reminder to all the adults of the world that war is very bad for children and how there must never, ever be another one.

Peter is greatly comforted by the news and races back to town to tell his story. Unfortunately, the adults will hear nothing of it and instead, force him to have his hair shaved off. Peter, betrayed and bald, runs away but is soon picked up by two policemen in a neighbouring town. A children's psychologist is summoned who gently coaxes his fantastical tale out of him. In the meantime, Gramp has been contacted and along with his teacher and doctor, they arrive to take him home. Gramp is very sorry for what has happened to his hair and solemnly swears that if it ever grows back green, it's going to stay that way!

### *The Adaptation:*

With permission from the rights holders, RKO Stage, New York, our creative mission is to adapt the original:

- Into a work of inspirational musical theatre
- For families and especially children.
- Retaining the original story, characters and setting.

The Boy With Green Hair is set in a mythical, post war America of hope and dreams, a place of white picket fences and uniformly pressed aprons. Of keystone cops and baking grandmas. A 'naive' fairy-tale place but also a place of conformity, where difference can be seen as dangerous.

The green-haired boy himself, is the symbol of difference. When first conceived, he stood for mistreated war orphans. Today his symbolism is universal: he is the black child in the white classroom, the unwanted immigrant, the bullied homosexual, the patronized eco-activist. He is our inner fear of being shunned and rejected. And he is our opportunity to stand courageously in the face of an often, careless world.

Musically, the adaptation will be unconstrained by time. Policemen can sound like Officer Krupke and bullying children can rap. The adaptation is most concerned with the emotional journey of our green-haired hero and with the flowering of his self-belief.

### *Inspiration:*

“We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory will swell when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

The Boy With Green Hair is a nostalgic parable urging us to act on our finer instincts. A wholehearted plea for love to banish fear, by showing empathy for what it is: the true angel of our better nature.

*Creative Team:*

**JODY TREHY - Composer & lyricist**

*"Jody Trehy is an Irish soul poet in the tradition that produced Van Morrison and Paul Brady but with an added flavour of European theatre that hints at Bertolt Brecht and Jacques Brel"* Herald, Scotland

Jody Trehy's second album, *Involuntary Noises* was recently shortlisted for the Brighton Fringe Award for Excellence. Notable credits include: music and lyrics for *MacBecks*, Executive Producer Riverdance and musical satire *Eejit Of Love* for RTE. He is an accomplished producer at *Studio 42* and a director of *One Louder Sound LTD*.

**PAUL HIGGS - Co-composer & orchestrator**

Paul Higgs is one of the UK's leading trumpet players and composers. He has composed and arranged for Film, TV and Theatre. Formerly music-director National Theatre London and Royal Shakespeare Company.

**MICK GORDON - Book and co-lyricist**

Mick Gordon is a producer, writer, director. Previously Associate Director National Theatre London, Artistic Director Gate Theatre London, Artistic Director Aarhus Theatre Denmark, Artistic Director On Theatre London. He has produced and directed over 200 productions worldwide. His own writing includes eight plays, a collection of essays, and his first television series in development with Lionsgate.

*info. about the recordings-*

### **Hard Nut To Crack:**

The opening song. A police station. Night. Two bumbling cops try to squeeze information out from a mysterious bald kid who has wandered into their town. The kid remains silent and is completely unfazed by their threats. A bored typist takes notes. During the song a children's psychologist enters.

*Singers: Amy Creighton, Tony Finnegan, Ian Virgo*

### **Welcome Song:**

Peter, a homeless war orphan, finally goes to live with his distant relative: Gramp. He arrives at Gramp's ramshackle house for the first time and is on his guard as he's well used to being made feel surplus to requirements. Gramp tries his old circus tricks to cheer Peter up but to no avail. Peter smashes an old but precious vase on purpose but when Gramp doesn't seem to get angry, he resolves to stay.

*Singers: David Shannon, Michael Corr*

### **Green:**

Peter, with a full head of green hair and a mandate from the other war orphans to tell his story, sings a song resolving to take his message to town and beyond. A recurring motif for the show, sung by Peter and the orphans.

*Singers: Michael Corr, Rachel Kennedy, Freya McManus, Noor Salem, Amy Creighton*

### **Catching:**

In school, the other kids have been told not to play with Peter in case they catch 'it'. They bully him relentlessly until the school bell rings whereby they automatically pack up and leave whilst singing a twisted version of their school anthem, preaching love for all mankind!

*Singers: Michael Corr, Rachel Kennedy, Freya McManus, Noor Salem, Eoin Behan, Tom Egan, Sean Hughes, Ethan O Connor, Priya Jobson, Joya Jobson, Anna Martin, Ellen McVey, Alissa Weir, Mae Higgins*

**Always The Dawn:**

Gramp works at night and must leave Peter on his own in the house. Peter is nervous of this. Gramp soothes him by telling him a funny story about the dark and what a wonderful and natural thing it is. Peter settles down while a ghostly maternal figure watches over him, singing a soothing lullaby.

*Singer: Amy Creighton*

**Master of Blarney:**

Early on, Peter speaks of Gramp to the psychologist, which segues into a reveal of Gramp in tuxedo and lit under spotlight. A former circus star, he performs a number telling of all his grand and famous feats. At the end of the song, the lights come up to reveal that he's performing to diners in a restaurant, where he works in the evenings.

*Singer: David Shannon*

*Keyboards and brass: Paul Higgs,  
Guitars: Fionan De Barra,  
Drums & Percussion: Paul Byrne*

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